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Hearing and Speech

Impaired Only

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May 9, 2011

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Mr. Joseph Szabo, Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
1120 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood and Administrator Szabo:

I am writing in support of the California High-Speed Rail Authority's recent application requesting \$1.63 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding and \$800 million in Fiscal Year 2010 transportation funding for high speed rail in California. Specifically, I want to express my support for redirecting all federal high-speed rail funding originally designated for Florida to the completion of the Merced-to-Bakersfield segment of the statewide system.

This is an opportunity to take these new funds and invest in the heart of California. By directing the returned Florida funding to the construction of the Merced-to-Bakersfield segment, the backbone of the system will be completed providing crucial links to Sacramento, the Bay Area and Southern California. In addition, the Merced station will provide an interim connection between high speed rail and the "Super Ace" express commuter rail project. The "Super Ace" express is envisioned to link the North Valley and Bay Area to high speed rail prior to completion of the high speed rail system in those areas.


As the Mayor of Modesto I am a supporter of economic development and job creation and believe that this new federal investment in high speed rail can serve the dual purpose of advancing the statewide high speed rail system while giving our region an economic boost that is badly needed. Our unemployment rates are the highest in the State, ranging from 18 to 22 percent. The Northern San Joaquin Valley is in desperate need of jobs, and our residents are ready to work. This economic stimulus will undoubtedly make a significant impact and bring hope to those without jobs.

The requested funding will complete the 180-mile spine of the Central Valley system for Phase I and will connect the major population centers of Bakersfield, Fresno, and Merced. The Merced region is also part of the five-county, 20-agency coalition to improve transit and rail connections in the Northern San Joaquin Valley and focus station development in the downtowns, where ridership will be highest and development is most sustainable. The Merced-to-Bakersfield segment will also facilitate a connection to the Altamont Commuter Express, which provides commuter service from the Northern San Joaquin Valley to the Bay Area.

The high speed rail project in California has received bipartisan support from the State Legislature, former Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, current Democratic Governor Jerry Brown and California voters. There is also great support from the California Labor Federation, California Chamber of Commerce and the Sierra Club of California.

Thank you for your consideration for providing the additional federal funding towards the construction of the Merced-to-Bakersfield segment of the California's high-speed rail project.

Respectfully,



JIM RIDENOUR, Mayor

cc: Roelof van Ark, California High-Speed Rail Authority Executive Director
California High-Speed Rail Authority